

**Kentucky Writing and Learning Academy (WLA) Concept Proposal
July 2005**

Though for years Kentucky has provided professional development and resources for teachers on such important matters as the writing process, strategies for teaching writing, criteria for good writing, scoring practices, characteristics of forms of writing called for in the assessment, and analysis of students' work, problems continue to exist in school writing programs because educators need help with the very foundation of writing: the writing assignment itself. Teachers can engage students in the writing process and conduct conferences, but if the writing assignment is weak, the odds for good writing and for learning are not strong. This need is evident from talking with teachers (P- 12) about their work with writing, and it is evident also in students' work submitted for the Writing Portfolio. We regularly see samples of students' writing that are weak primarily because the teacher's assignment or approach to writing is inappropriate for what is called for in our assessment. The need is more evident in assignments for writing in content areas other than English/language arts; however, the need is evident also in assignments/approaches to writing taken by teachers in English/language arts, and the need is very evident in assignments prepared by "new" teachers.

In order to address these foundational needs, we propose that the Kentucky Department of Education sponsor the Kentucky Writing and Learning Academy (WLA). This academy will support educators by preparing them to incorporate writing into standards-based instruction. Through participation in WLA, teachers will better understand how writing instruction enhances content knowledge, and administrators will better understand research-based models of writing instruction.

A core team of educators from the Writing Advisory Committee, the Cluster Leader Network, and the Kentucky Writing Project Network will collaborate to design a professional development program that adheres to Kentucky's professional development standards and promotes the understanding that effective assignments will:

- Provide stronger incentive for students to write and for teachers to include writing for instruction and assessment
- Improve instruction
- Use writing to promote learning
- Address more fully the state's standards
- Reveal awareness of the state's expectations in its assessment
- Reflect understanding of KERA principles and key documents, such as the Kentucky Learner Goals, Program of Studies and Core Content for Assessment
- Avoid current problems (writing as an add-on, writing merely to produce a form, writing that does not promote learning).

In order to implement the Kentucky Writing and Learning Academy, staff will need to complete the following:

- Arrange for a memorandum of agreement with a participating university
- Meet with members of the WLA Core Team to design components of the academy
- Present the professional development plan to the Kentucky Department of Education's Clearinghouse in order to receive budget approval
- Identify and train WLA session leaders
- Arrange for regional delivery of the academy

